



I-90 – Midway Curve Slope Stabilization

Governor Gregoire ordered a reassessment of unstable slopes along I-90 in the Snoqualmie Pass area in late 2005 following rockslides in September and November. The WSDOT chief engineering geologist reported to the governor in January 2006 identifying three slopes near milepost 66 (Midway Curve) as high-priority sites for slope stabilization.



When will these three slopes be stabilized?

Our goal is to have these slopes stabilized by the end of October 2006. Scarsella Brothers Inc. of Seattle was awarded the \$4.9 million contract.

How big is this job?

This project is about ten times the size of the slope repairs after the September and November 2005 rockslides. Dozens of stabilization bolts will be drilled into the rock face and placed under tension to keep the slope stable. The cable netting that will be put up at the end of the project, to keep rocks from falling onto the roadway, has an area the size of two football fields.

How many unstable slopes like this do we have statewide?

About 2,700. Ten percent of those slopes have ratings that make them candidates for fixing as funding becomes available. We will fix the unstable slopes above the roadways with the highest traffic first.

How does WSDOT decide which slopes are at the greatest risk for rockslides?

WSDOT uses a rating system that assesses the instability of the rock or soil on a given slope, and factors in the potential impact to motorists and commerce of a slide on that adjacent roadway. The rating system doesn't predict rockslides, of course, but it guides us toward those slopes that should be a high priority for stabilization.

Has this work caused traffic delays?

We worked hard in planning this so traffic would flow as smooth as possible during the construction. The workzone bypass was built mostly at night, when traffic was the lightest. During the stabilization work, the bypass allows two lanes of continuous I-90 traffic in each direction.

How are bicyclists accommodated?

I-90 over Snoqualmie Pass provides a scenic and challenging bike route for serious cyclists, many of whom are involved in cross-country cycling. WSDOT engineers keep this recreational route open during the current work.

Construction and traffic engineers have worked hard to provide highly visible signs and adequate space for bicyclists to pass through the slope stabilization project. The roadway and shoulders through the work zone are narrower than the adjacent roadway with concrete barriers protecting both sides.

Many bicyclists have commented that they wouldn't feel comfortable riding on a four foot wide shoulder with a concrete barrier preventing them from exiting the roadway in an emergency. Therefore, bicyclists will be directed to walk their bikes behind the protective barrier through the work zone. WSDOT officials want to express these concerns to all bicycling enthusiasts and recommend that they consider an alternate route.

Are we safe driving Snoqualmie Pass?

Anytime you cut a roadway through a mountain range, gravity and erosion lead to rocks and soil falling over time. This means that there is always some level of risk driving on those roads, but large rockslides like the ones that happened at the pass last September and November are thankfully rare.

For More Information

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www.wsdot.wa.gov/Projects/i90/MidwayCurvesSlopeStabilization/



Traffic bypass construction



Free-flowing traffic on bypass



Drilling the holes where stabilizing bolts will be inserted



Removing loose rock and debris